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THE MARSHLANDS

Souvenir in Song of Grand Pré

JOHN FREDERIC HERBIN

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THE MARSHLANDS

(SECOND EDITION)

AND

THE TRAIL OF THE TIDE

BY

JOHN FREDERIC HERBIN, B.A.,
Author of "History of Grand-Pré."

TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRIGGS
WESLEY BUILDINGS
MONTREAL: C. W. COATES HALIFAX: S. F. HUESTIS
1899.

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✓ A

Fine money

Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine, by WILLIAM BRIGGS, at the Department of Agriculture.

These are but sketches of the common way,
Caught from the phases that have held me long,
Near the green marshlands and the red tides strong,
Whose fleeting picture-glory I would stay.

These are but glints from a light-flooded day,
Whether in picture or in simple song:
My teacher hath been kind, nor led me wrong
Through seasons of calm labor and display.

The purpose of my pictures would not show
Only that life hath pleasure for the eye:
My lines would point the way into the heart
Of all this glory, which will set aglow
Thy passing days; until the rhapsody
Of wakened life of thee becomes a part.

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THE MARSHLANDS.

ACROSS THE DYKES.

THE dykes half bare are lying in the bath
  Of quivering sunlight on this Sunday morn;
  And bobolinks aflock make sweet the worn
Old places where two centuries of swath
Have fallen to earth before the mowers' path.
  Across the dykes the bell's low sound is borne
  From green Grand-Pré, abundant with the corn,
With milk and honey which it always hath.
And now I hear the Angelus ring far;
  See faith bow many a head that suffered wrong
    Near all these plains they wrested from the tide.
The visions of their last great sorrows mar
  The greenness of these meadows; in the song
    Of birds I feel a tear that has not dried.

THE RETURNED ACADIAN.

ALONG my fathers' dykes I roam again,
Among the willows by the river-side.
These miles of green I know from hill to tide,
And every creek and river's ruddy stain.
Neglected long and shunned, our dead have lain.
Here, where a people's dearest hope has died,
Alone of all their children scattered wide,
I scan the sad memorials that remain.
The dykes wave with the grass, but not for me;
The oxen stir not while this stranger calls;
From these new homes upon the green hill-side,
Where speech is strange and a new people free,
No voice cries out in welcome; for these halls
Give food and shelter where I may not bide.

FAED'S EVANGELINE.

" Sat by some nameless grave, and thought that perhaps in its bosom
He was already at rest, and she longed to slumber beside him."

—*Longfellow.*

EVANGELINE, sad-eyed with longing pain,
With silent lips that now have ceased to grieve,
Tender and firm and patient to achieve,—
Thy love is true whether his form has lain
Where never thy fond arms may find again;
Or feels thy faith inspire him to believe
That ways may open that shall long deceive;—
Oh, calm of courage never to attain!
Sweet, sorrowing, mute, unplaining maidenhood,
Thou art the poem of that deathless fate
Still told in every year of rustling hay
That greens the meadows, where thy feet have stood.
When tides come early, or are lingering late,
Forever will thy face be o'er Grand-Pré.

AN ACADIAN AT GRAND-PRÉ.

To-day, alone of all my scattered race,
I see again the beauty of our land,
Made fair and fruitful by a banished hand;
Made sweet of tongue, now with no biding-place.
And Nature has remembered, for a trace
Of calm Acadian life yet holds command,
Where undisturbed the rustling willows stand,
And the curved grass, telling the breeze's pace.
Before the march of power the weak must bend,
And yet forgive; the savage strong will smite.
The glossing words of reason and of song,
To tell of hate and virtue to defend,
Shall never set the bitter deed aright,
Nor satisfy the ages with the wrong.

THE GASPEREAU.

BELOW me winds the river to the sea,
On whose brown slope stood wailing, homeless maids;
Stood exiled sons; unsheltered hoary heads;
And sires and mothers dumb in agony.
The awful glare of burning homes, where free
And happy late they dwelt, breaks on the shades
Encompassing the sailing fleet; then fades
With tumbling roof upon the night-bound sea.
How deep is hope in sorrow sunk! How harsh
The stranger voice; and loud the hopeless wail!
Then silence came to dwell; the tide fell low;
The embers died. On the deserted marsh,
Where grain and grass stirred only to the gale,
The moose unchased dare cross the Gaspereau.

THE DYKES OF ACADIE.

Oh, marshes green, the dykes of Acadie,
I have been nursed upon thy ancient breast;
I know the patience of thy lap's calm rest;
Bound with the peace of thy serenity.
How many lessons have I learned of thee;
New-born to life, by thee baptized and blest,
Made one with every season's song and nest;
Made one with thee, oh, dykes of Acadie!
So may I live each full and fleeting day,
Absorbing and outgiving all, nor vain
Accepting every shine and every shower;
And lifted like a blade of grass to play
In sun and breeze. So am I old, dear plain,
The better to be young as any flower.

A RIFLED GRAVE AT GRAND-PRÉ.

THESE silent chambers, which thy dead immure,
  Have felt no changes with the changing land,
  Until to-day when a rude foot did stand
Within thy narrow house, the grave not sure.
Yet with no name or age that might endure,
  Thy mould is gathered to the kindly sand,
  Safe from the touch of desecrating hand,
The shroud no guard nor blackened bones secure.
Kind Nature has absorbed thee as her own,
  Sweet fate indeed to live no other fame,
    To feel the tides and seasons in their flow.
Thy story is not bitter there alone
  Without a place to mark thee now, no name,
    Thy empty coffin for the soulless foe.

THE NIGHT-MOWER.

In the soft dew-fall of an autumn night
A solitary mower marks his way
With hissing scythe in the brine-savored hay
Long ere the dawn is flooding into light.
From restless doubting now unveils my sight;
I shame to hear the certain swing and play
Of the strong toiler's arm whose night is day,
Treading the hours through in faithful might.
Ever he glides with form invisible;
His ringing scythe oft filling the dark plain.
The moving murmur of the coming tide
Stirs the broad night, now full and palpable;
For wholesome pride and faith are mine again
Near the night-mower by the river-side.

THE SEA-HARVEST.

On the great sea-marsh where the eddies stray,
  The mowers strike ere yet the dew is fled.
  The salt-grass falls before their heavy tread,
Filling with odorous breath the whole green way.
On the tide's back, now with the broadened day,
  Like a mild beast of burden slowly led,
  The floating grass is meshed and gatherèd;
A great tide-harvest of salt-smelling hay.
Where herons stalk, and the shy mallard glides
  In stillest haunts, is the man-worker seen;
    Even the sea must garner for his good,
Till high and dark above the marsh and tides
  Stand the great hay-towers, as they loom and lean,
    Like turrets grim, to mark the solitude.

AFTERMATH.

AUGUST is hot from the touch of an ardent sun,
  Lolling and still in fields and windless places;
Idle all day like a woman with hair undone,
  Her feet unshod, her bosom bare of laces.

All her passionate beauty and strength are here,
  Complete, and grown to power beyond disguising.
Her flying days are short as the last draw near
  And wane, September anear on wings uprising.

Hotter glow her burning eyes and harsh
  Where the scythe has bared the grassy slopes and meadows;
On the breathless sea, and the stifled miles of marsh
  Where spruce and willow lose the cool of shadows.

Yet the dewy nights are sweet; and the lagging dawn
  Awakes to the ringing scythe, like a heavy sleeper;
And the dyke-ward drift of the tide with the marsh-hay
    mown,
  Drives off the cranes from the hidden creeks grown
    deeper.

As a tired troop of horses march in sleep
  When the weary riders hear not the sounding sabres;
So comes the tide with the flooding march of the deep,
  Across the marshes to the winding rivers.

And a ship like a gull swings off the anchoring clay,
  And drifts with the fisher-craft from the nearer offing;
While the inshore flight of the gulls on the edge of day
  Startles the silent flats with joyless laughing.

As the sea drifts in the toilers deep in the tide
  Gather the grass, as fishermen drag the meshes—
Hunters surrounding the game on every side,
  Till the spoil is captive in the binding leashes.

Trumpet-like the call of the herds long-blown
  Wafts mellow and far to the drowse of the sense's hearing;

AFTERMATH.

The perfumes fresh from the marshy meadows flown
Bring taste of the tide whose overflow is nearing.

Still the meadows are the mower has shorn,
Where thistles stood, and perfumes fled from the flowers
And the stubble stark where the summer's yield was borne
Now seemeth dead to the sun and the touch of showers.

From the empty barns have the hollow echoes fled;
The lofts are loaded deep with the grassy sweetness.
The grain ungarnered and ripe swings lazy head,
And all the corn is bursting with its greatness.

Leaning hay-ricks dark rise everywhere
Across the meadows and the waters looming.
The higher tides flood the marshes unaware,
Among strange ways and newer channels roaming.

September comes to the bare burnt places, and cools
With gentle touch and breath, a glad new-comer;
Refreshing the languorous lakes and the dying pools
Before the advent of the Indian summer.

AFTERMATH.

Fragrant are the orchards ripe of fruit,
And fairest the flowers of September-bringing.
Songsters seem to be wording a second suit,
So eager and so joyful in their singing.

Primroses yet are blown, and the thistle abloom,
The August-flower bright from the bud its month gone over;
Asters smile near the rushes' damp and gloom;
A sweetness lingèrs near the thrifty clover.

The season will not die though all the dykes
Seemed to the roots destroyed by the ruthless mower:
Where now the cattle graze, and the marsh-hawk strikes,
Are the fields of aftermath of the secret sower.

THE DIVER.

LIKE marble, nude, against the purple sky,
In ready poise, the diver scans the sea,
Gemming the marsh's green placidity
And mirroring the fearless form on high.
Behold the outward leap—he seems to fly!
His arms like arrow-blade just speeded free;
His body like the curving bolt, to be
Deep driven till the piercing flight shall die.
Sharply the human arrow cleaves the tide,
Only a foaming swell to mark his flight;
While shoreward moves the silent ring on ring.
And now the sea is stirred and broken wide
Before the swimmer's passage free and light,
And bears him as a courser bears a king.

HAYING.

FROM the soft dyke-road, crooked and waggon-worn,
Comes the great load of rustling scented hay,
Slow-drawn with heavy swing and creaky sway
Through the cool freshness of the windless morn.
The oxen, yoked and sturdy, horn to horn,
Sharing the rest and toil of night and day,
Bend head and neck to the long hilly way
By many a season's labor marked and torn.
On the broad sea of dyke the gathering heat
Waves upward from the grass, where road on road
Is swept before the tramping of the teams.
And while the oxen rest beside the sweet
New hay, the loft receives the early load,
With hissing stir, among the dusty beams.

THE DYKE.

FROM dyke to hill-side sways the level sweep
  Of all the ripened hay in mid-July;
  A tideless sea of rustling melody,
Beside the river-channels of the deep.
Astray and straggling, or in broken heap,
  Where birdlings flutter, dark the fences lie.
  Far off, the tortuous rush-grown creek is dry,
Where looms the leaning barn like ancient keep.
Showing to heaven where his way has been,
  The sounding wheel now bares what nature hides;
    Drowns the low nestling cry and ruthless kills;
The rustic Neptune steering o'er the green,
  With chariot music trembling to the hills,
    Before whose horses' tread the grass divides.

ABSENT.

ART thou fled, my companion; no echo remains in the shadows,
Sombre and still in the wood of thy warblings tender and strong?
Where by the lakes or the rivers, where in the woods and the meadows,
May the lost singer be sought without the monition of song?

Peace and its pleasure remain from thy lay of the eve and the morning,
Given unasked, as the perfumes that flow and go wafting unknown.

ABSENT.

Haply, some soul has received it, hardened with pride and with scorning,
Sweetening the spirit forever in a way that may never be shown.

Beauty is swept from the flowers, and grain from the stalks that are broken;
Chill is the breath of the breeze, tho' the sun shone a summer through.
Yet there is place in the heart for a word so long ago spoken;
Remembrances stay when the days go not back nor their labors undo.

Harsh is the voice of the sea; and the fog on its face set with frowning,
Rolls away from the shore as with curses, not to return.
Well thou art silent and gone, here calm in the tumult is drowning;
Tenderness lost like childhood in manhood sullen and strong.

Many a heart like mine for thee perhaps is calling,
For the places of light and song have become a solitude.

ABSENT.

Where is thy summer of song that gladdened the sunbeams
falling,
Filling the air afar, and echoing from the wood?

Southward thy wing and thy warble flit among branches
and flowers,
Born with a passion not dead, nor to sleep with the end
of a song;
Never to pause while the seasons garner the minutes and
hours,
Frailest and shyest of singers, shunning the dissonant
throng.

Art thou forever gone, or soon to return to my hearing?
Never were fields and woods like the floor of our
summer skies.
Teach me once more in the Spring; teach me to utter
unfearing,
Sweet as thou singest ever, the songs that shall ever rise.

IN THE GASPEREAU VALLEY.

THE rippling river ceased to sing, with flow
Quick-speeding downward to the red-shored Bay;
For now the tide has found the tortuous way
Between the hills where orchard blossoms blow;
And the green dykes and meadows are aglow
With th' even radiance of a golden day.
The waters' hush is strange; and the last lay
Of unseen cat-birds ripples to and fro.
The day is gone, and with a lingering hand
The sea's dark fingers press upon the shore.
The bat has risen into broken flight
Above the bridge, and darts from strand to strand.
The silence deepens over me; while more
And more I feel the fulness of the night.

THE RIVER-TIDE.

Soft wandering eyes of brown have watched the tide
Slip out, until the river sings again;
The musk-rat gliding upward to his den,
Hid in the dyke's high slope, and darker side.
The deeper dusk has filled the valley's wide
Green lining; and the shad-bug's pencil-mark
Of fire cuts straight across the deepest dark;
The evening star close to the mountain-side.
And the soft windless air is balmy sweet,
Though bobolink and robin do not sing.
Without the tide, the stream has fallen down
To a dark waveless pool beneath our feet;
And eyes yet gazing out on everything
Have changed to black, which ere the dusk were
brown.

THE BROKEN DYKE.

FROM the far ocean, hour after hour,
  Inflowed the waveless and quick-rising flood;
  Until the marsh-reeds like a storm-struck wood,
Beneath the murky waters curve and cower.
The tortuous dyke-wall, crowned of grass and flower,
  That has a century of tides withstood,
  Leans hard to-night against the sea-front rude,
Awaiting the great current's fullest power.
In vain the strength and virtue of its years!
  O'er fence and furrow, through the broken walls,
    Across the verdant fields, the tide has thrown
Its torrent arms; and the awed listener hears
  Through the deep night the herds' harsh cries and calls,
    As the fierce ocean leaps to claim its own.

SCOWING.

FROM the marsh hay-fields, owned of sea and sky,
Come the wet scow-loads, drifting with the tide;
While fragmentary breezes curl and glide
Over the silver surface lazily.
With each green burden builded broad and high
The laden scows lean clumsy, side by side.
No ripples mark their passage; yet they ride
In to the creek's soft landing red and dry.
The tide-deserted creek glows in the sun;
And the wet scows, now stranded on the shore,
Gape dark and empty, near a loaded cart
Drawn by two sturdy oxen, white and dun,
Which, as the evening reddens more and more,
Bend to the driver's word, ready to start.

THE MARSHLANDS.

Oh, dykes that are mourning a nation
That laid you and lifted you high;
Ye fields with your old lamentation
And the grief that shall live with the sky,

I have found me adrift on your meadows,
And hailed by the voice of the deep,
As if called from the region of shadows,
Or waked from the vision of sleep.

I have lifted my face as from slumber,
And leaped to the touch of the sun,
In the days just beginning to number
In deeds and in actions undone.

As a child that must learn to unravel
The things that shall trouble his sight,
And with feet that are fated to travel
Through recurring quick daytime and night;

As I grow in the love of my loving,
And learn to forget all the dream,
Whence the youth of my labor was moving,
Till the branch broke away from the stream;

As I hurry along with the hours,
With the purpose that perils and saves,
And fling out all my efforts and powers,
As a swimmer flings into the waves;

So I gladden with joy you imparted,
So I weep with the grief of your tears—
One shall succor me oft broken-hearted,
The other will strengthen my years.

For the word that you spoke to my hearing,
And the life that you served to my blood,
Shall be kept as a tender endearing,
As the love of my soul's maidenhood.

For your life has become of my living,
  Through and through all the woof and the warp,
Of my being—incoming, outgiving—
  As the wind in the strings of a harp.

I have left all my earlier being,
  Like a soul that is rid of its frame,
And with eyes of another am seeing
  To recall the last life with a name.

How the way of this life shall be bolder,
  And be given to every desire,
From the calm that shall come to the older,
  To the madness of the youth-heart on fire.

For I know not myself any longer,
  In the light that has entered my soul,
With these tides I am called to be stronger,
  With these marshes my life shall unroll.

BOBOLINKS.

A FLASH of gold and jet, then bubbling throats,
From meadow-fence and dyke fill up the breeze.
List and bethink! These are not reveries
In song, nor passion shaped in silver notes.
The warble's expectation never floats
Beyond the reach of wing. The melodies
Seek not the past, nor pierce futurities.
These happy spirits wrapped in glossy coats
Hear Nature's gentle calling and reply.
Canst thou not see, within each feathered thing
There is a life that looks nowhere beyond
To unattempted songs and heights of sky?
In each quick moment, eager voice and wing
Find life's sweet acme holding breath in bond.

THE FIRST ROBIN.

A ROBIN came to-day with earliest dawn,
And whistled through the orchard-avenues,
A bare and birdless scope of clinging dews.
From tree and shadowy fence the plumage shone
Of this sole singer, while through lane and lawn
He called in vain for answer to the news
He brought to-day among the misty views;
And then his whistle and his wing were gone.
The piping said not whence, or why he came,
Before a bud is broken on a tree,
While yet the brooks are icy, and the cold
Clings to the earth. His breast was like a flame
In the dull morn; his calling seemed to be
For Life, not yet awake in field and wold.

MIDSUMMER.

THE even-tide is hushed, and back to rest,
Along the moody hills where oat-fields sigh,
The dilatory winds waft sleepy by.
The day is festal in the curtained west,
And opens wide its halls and chambers dressed
In colors' splendidness, as if the sky
Gave honor to the earth's maturity;
While Night stands in the east with rayless breast.
Content fills every scene the vision takes
Unto itself. Its calm reigns everywhere
In fruitful luxury of field and hill.
There comes a signal-song, a frog awakes
And stirs the stilly dusk; then all the air,
As Night comes down, the chorus-pipings fill.

MORN.

LATE Morn, with drowsy eyelids drunk with night,
  Still-breathed in slumber, slipped a glance
And slept again, veiling her eyes' delight.
  Too deep the ecstasy of nightly trance
To break the power of a tender dream.
  Faint music stirred her hearing till awake
    Her glances silvered from her tardy bed.
Then wakefulness blushed with a warmer beam;
  Life kissed her form and in her footstep spake;
    And Day sprang up enthralled and ravishèd.
She fled, yet smiled from mounts and over glades;
Sprang through the forests and awoke the shades.
In vain his ardor; yet he chased and leaped,
In the fragrance of her distant tresses steeped.

THE MARSH.

THE suns and shadows of thy seasons many
  Have not upraised thee from thy low estate,
  Nor made thy heavy pulses fluctuate
Through quickening sunlight and long hours rainy.
Against thy side the sea's strong arm falls puny;
  Upon thy breast vain is the creek's far flow;
  The measuring march of rivers' tidal glow;—
Only the sky can span, agloom or sunny.
When grasses wave, or all is wrapped in snow,
  There comes to thee no glad awakening,
    Beneath the flight of days and flow of tides.
The wafting wings that circle thee are slow,
  And seldom voice awakes the gathering
    Of days wherein thy purpose calmly bides.

AFTERMATH.

BUT late I saw the mower's marching sweep
Lay bare and dry from upland to the tide
The whole green dyke. Even the bright hill-side
In scattered rose and golden-rod lay deep.
Swift wheeled the busy birds of prey, to leap
Through the bright sunlight nowhere now denied;
Where thick and close the shielding grasses dyed:
And the full barns the sweet hay-odors keep.
Then night shed rain on the uncovered fields,
Lying in barrenness, a stubbly waste,
Where, like a raging fire, the scythe has been.
To-day the aftermath renews and shields
All the denuded dykes with kindly haste,
And everywhere again the plains are green.

WILLOWS.

WILLOWS whisper strange, this noon, with green
And gentle wavings. Pools and shadows merge
Beneath the branches, where the rushes lean
Or stumble prone; and sad along the verge
The marsh-hen totters. Strange the branches play
Above the snake-roots in the dark and wet,
Adown the hueless trunks, this summer day.
Strange things the willows whisper. List, mine ear.
Mayhap some story-wind would have thee hear.
I know the breeze that softly murmurs so
Hath sought this place, returning like the sun
To linger in the valley, where the flow
Of tide and season fills and falls; begun

And ended many a nameless year. Again
Unheeded and again unheard, a tale
May freight these dreamy breezes of the vale.
Unvoiced I listened, and I heard with pain;
So sad the voice, so sad the story told:
"Oh, willow! true hath been my heart, and long
I waited for the bird with wing of gold
To mate among thy branches, and whose song
Should tell me of my love's return.
The branch he broke while yet my breast did burn
With all its love and pain. The vow
He uttered, 'Ere this branch we lovers set
Becomes thrice higher than thy tender brow;
After the yellow-wing her brood shall get,
I will come back to thee.' My frequent glance,
A loving maiden left in Acadie,
Hath asked of thee, What keeps my love in France?
Thy branches all this while, from twig to tree,
Have been my hope; but now the tree hath borne
A nest and happy two, and just this morn,
Ah me, they fled." This was the breeze's strain.
I lingered yet, but listened all in vain.

WILLOWS.

Willows old and deathless near the fence
  Crooked everywhere, here tottering to their fall,
  Half hid in golden-rod and grasses tall
Along the marshes. Winding-rutted thence
The road leads seaward where the anchor clings
  And seine-poles split the eddy. On the hill
A lake lies blue. The swallow's dipping rings,
  And wavelets play among the leaves that spread,
Or sink cool swathed along the hidden trunk.
  Brown-skinned urchins 'mong the willows spill
Within the shade with pleasure drunk,
  Afloat in azure fallen from the sky;
Plucking the lilies, once the heaven's stars.
  Before the glossy hair is dry,
Late drenched like lily-leaves, boy skill prepares
  The willow-pipe to speak a noisy note;
Or, merman-like, with ringlets all afloat,
  Among the flowers joins the swollen throat
Of stranded frog, or drowns his song. Red lips
  Apart with song and laughter; eyes that glance
Into the sun; and pipes that play all day
  The tunes that come with happy chance.
The heart-song through the whistle slips,
  And like the echo dies away.

WILLOWS.

The breezes rustle with the old-time voice;
The laughter lags, the pipe-notes will not stay;
We drift beyond the walls of yesterday,
Where songs still linger and must long rejoice.
Sing, piper, on thy willow-reed sing clear.
Waft, breezes, wing me till my youth be near.
Sing, willows, shake my heart-strings into chords,
Intenser for the absence of the words.
Piper, breezes, willows, I am sleeping
In the heaven of your keeping.

DEPARTURE.

LONG have I lingered where the marshlands are,
  Oft hearing in the murmur of the tide
  The past, alive again and at my side
With unrelenting power and hateful war.
Here in the calm of dykes that spread afar
  Their summer green, or winter snow, hate died,
  And burning rage, in peace that bids me bide—
In steadfast love that guides me like a star.
Ye summer meadows, and ye winter plains,
  That knew my hapless race, I go
    As one who lived beneath his father's roof;
Who heard at eve the slow-returning wains;
  The far, soft melody of bleat and low;
    The nearer noisy shuttle in the woof.

A SHOWER.

THE morn is moody and the clouds brood low,
While a soft expectation fills each place
Where grasses lean and flowers droop like lace:
The air is vacant, and no breezes blow.
The thunder for an hour rolled deep and slow;
Then with the first cool gust that swept my face,
From the dim west with quick increasing pace,
The rain fell round me with a rustling flow.
The grass is waving and no flower mourns.
From secret places, fresh and fragrant balm
Fills every dusty road and hidden lane.
Earth sighs as the soft hand of heaven turns
The draught upon her lips. Even the calm
Blue hills stir musically in the rain.

IN THE RAIN.

With the new hay, a dripping, scented load,
  Comes the slow ox-team with a noiseless tread
  Through the thick rain with bent, unswerving head,
Toiling along the soft and silent road.
Across the marsh the ripened hay, windrowed,
  Lies all deserted, where the toilers sped.
  The dyke-road winding to the leaning shed
Has but a solitary, hobbling toad.
Adown the wide and grass-grown village street,
  The last dark phantom pair of steaming steeds
    Leap headlong toward the open barn, with chains
That rattle louder than their rapid feet.
  Until the tide has left the swaying reeds
    High on the marsh, the morning through, it rains.

TO THE SINGERS OF MINAS.

I.—RAND.

THOU, long a poet at the lyric shrine,
Mad'st not a prayer to any muse or power;
Letting the seasons go as but an hour,
Until the afternoon of life did shine.
Thy silent lips now move to verse divine,
And Minas adds a jewel to her dower
With every song of thee which, like a flower,
Unfolds with hue and fragrance pure and fine.
Fundy and Blomidon, and the dark Isle
Recumbent seem like servants at thy feet;
And elemental forces but the birth
Of messengers at thy late singing-while,
To bear thy music to our hearts that greet
Thee as a singer, just found on the earth.

TO THE SINGERS OF MINAS.

II.—ROBERTS.

Is green-walled Acadie a later Greece,
  And thou a classic come to life again
  From thy historic home to modern men
In this green world of beauty and of peace?
A sculptor then, a poet now, whose lease
  Of labor is to carve and chisel clear
  Each form of lyric shape, until I hear
Not song, but see thy pictures rest at ease.
The broad green plain of level Tantramar
  Is but the Tempe of thy ancient time.
    The tides, and all the Fundean crystal ways
Live as thy blue Ægean was in far
  Dim yesterdays; and all the suns that climb
    This sky knew thee in Helle's brightest days.

III.—CARMAN.

Thou mystic singer whose spontaneous song,
  Vague as the tide-tones of the Fundy floods,
  Sweet as the sweetest singer of the woods—
Thou, too, hast raised thy lyric voice among
The places where the ebb and flood so strong
  Fill with red life the veins of Acadie;

And in thy wandering voices call to thee
Sad with remembrance of the deathless wrong.
And thou art in the circle of the few
Who tune their voices to these singing meads,
And know the assonance of shore and tide,
And the swift stroke of wavelet slipping through
The grasses; learning from the river reeds
The deepest chorus of the ocean wide.

IV.

The dyke-lands and the meadows of the sea
That fill with joy the sunshine of our day;
The river-lances driven from the Bay;
The Gaspereau's unmoved serenity
Beside that place of crime and misery,
Marked by the hallowed willows of Grand-Pré;
The plowing Blomidon—make an array
Of phases to inspire both you and me.
And here has love uprisen into song,
And filled our souls with yearning and the glow
Of deathless life. Where was that hate of yore
That made our fathers foemen, now grows strong
The peace of nationhood, although the flow
Of tears has marked the whole red reach of shore.

A DREAM.

A SUNBEAM fell upon my drowsy eyes,
And soon within my veins its fluid gold
With glad monitions through my being rolled.
Dull days had hung like curtained mysteries,
And nights were weary with the starless skies.
At once came life, and fire, and joys untold,
And promises for violets to unfold;
And every breeze had shreds of melodies,
So faint and sweet. Upon the marsh late sere
Broke green and rippling grass and blossom-rays.
Along with Beauty came full floods once more
Of gladsome hours, leaving their pleasure near
On every sign of death; and all the ways
Brimmed with abundance where the beams down-
pour.

LEAFLESS.

FROM dawn to gloaming, and from dark to dawn,
Dreams the unvoiced, declining Michaelmas.
O'er all the orchards where a summer was
The noon is full of peace, and loiters on.
The branches stir not as the light airs run
All day ; their stretching shadows slowly pass
Through the curled surface of the faded grass,
Telling the hours of the cloudless sun.
From some near branch a crow invisible
Breaks the warm silence with a mocking cry,
And stirs the quivering distance of the day.
The startled noon awakes as from a spell,
And from afar comes a soft melody,
The melancholy cadence of a jay.

RETURN.

SINGER of hope and of peace, soul of the dawn and the gloaming,
What will deny us joy beneath the whole blue sky?
Never the greens of Spring; never the blossoms coming,
Soft with the breath of June when thy fullest song is high.

Never the sweep of the grain to the cloud-libation pouring,
Here where afloat and afield the season's reign is good.
Never the sea-breeze and land-breeze that take thy song a-soaring,
Calmly as Dawn sweeps the hill, or as Night slips out of the wood.

RETURN.

Never the breath of fogs with a sail just in from the ocean,
Drifting with song and swing to the quay spray-wet in the tide;
Nor the sweet noon-rest from toil, nor evening's soothing potion,
Life just learning to live in the glories that shall abide.

Happiest singer of Spring-birds, each of thy lays seeming sweeter,
Tells to me over and over the things that have gone with a year.
Every rhapsodic strain slips eagerly fuller and fleeter—
Remembering, my answer is silence; my welcome, the joy while I hear.

What will deny us more when this virgin time is older?
Never the promise it makes of the loveliness yet to be:
Then will be strength of growth, and feeling deeper and bolder;
Summer abroad like a woman proud in maturity.

None shall deny that I claim thee, just back from a winter of winging,
Here in the early morn thy throat is first to greet;

RETURN.

Giving once more to my ear thy richest old-time singing;
Making the silence stir; making the day-soul beat.

When on the ledge's breast the tidal heart is lulling,
Mid-day biding near, flushed with its own display;
When the lake is waveless, and lilies droop for culling,
Yet will thy note be sweet and joyfully fill the day.

Speech awake that was dead; a word come back that was spoken;
Love retold with a hope that brightens when almost gone;
So came thy early song like a strain from a string that was broken,
Stirring the dull of night with the hastening flow of dawn.

Calm with the truth of life, deep with the love of loving,
New, yet never unknown, my heart takes up the tune.
Singing that needs no words, joy that needs no proving,
Basking in one long dream as Summer bides with June.

Often I listen and wonder, when gently thy warble is ended,
Whether a language is truer than the strains of a bird-made song.

RETURN.

Hath ever man sung as you sing, eagerly mellow and splendid,
Yet singing alone for the singing, unconscious how sweet and strong?

Uttering unconscious of rhythm, in waves of inspiration,
Full of the passion that guides and bids the song to swell;
Seeking no lover to listen to pleasure's pure elation;
Seeking the whole true song, unknowing how ill or how well.

Here is our dearest theme where skies are blue and brightest,
To sing a single song in places that love it best;
Freighting the happy breeze when snowy clouds are lightest,
Making a song to cease not when the singer is dumb in rest.

Flooding the loveless heart with a strange and unknown fire;
Warmth, and the passion to live making deep the theme of the song—
This is thy mission, sweet singer, so speak to the strings of my lyre;
Dull and untuned is my heart till its music be awakened and strong.

THE ACADIAN EXILE.

WHERE are the hands to guide the waiting plow;
To sway the lumbering oxen with a stroke,
Now waiting at the bars for band or yoke?
An exile curst, as with a branded brow.
The kindly walls that cannot shield him now
Are black in embers that have ceased to smoke,
Wrapt tenderly with marsh-fogs as a cloak.
The willows shade no gables where they bow.
This wandering exile from dead Acadie
Sees through the mist of sorrow never done
That mercy has no hand held out to save.
Yet ne'er again the meadows of the sea
Mayhap shall know this heart-sore, weary son,
Denied the kindness of an alien grave.

MY FIRST LOCUST.

THE morning has a kingbird with its flight
To heaven, feeding on the wind; and loud
From dyke-lands sweetened under grassy cloud
Comes the sharp buzzing of the mower's bite.
The locust in the elm sings his delight,
And clears my heart as from a wrapping shroud,
Amid these many fruitful gardens bowed
With God's own vintage of the summer's height.
So is my summer in its growth supreme,
With all this world's enrichment green and gold,
And merging into day of perfect love.
The locust sings as in my life's first beam
The song that does not die and is not old,
With God-taught truth wherein my faith shall move.

A WHITE BUTTERFLY.

EMBODIED act of nature, thou sweet thought,
Just crystallized into a rapturous beam
Of fluttering whiteness, thou shalt always seem
The symbolizing hope of common lot.
Like many a soul upon this earthly spot,
Haply thou seest as in doubtful dream,
Too faintly drawn for any thought or theme,
The earlier life that is not all forgot.
And all thy beauty's utmost destiny
Knows not a jot of that proud rage that clings
To man's ambitious soul, nor dies nor yields;
Yet art thou sweeter to my loving eye,
Arrayed in purity of white, with wings
That linger ever in the common fields.

A HOMESTEAD.

(WINTER.)

I FOUND the fullest days of summer here
  Between these sloping meadow-hills and yon;
  And came all beauty then from dawn to dawn,
Whether the tide was veiled or flowing clear.
To-day in snowy raiment nowise drear
  Thou liest peaceful, as with hair undone,
  And every jewel aside. Thou dreamest on,
Soon to be waked by the new-flowering year.
Old trees and walks will never make thee old,
  For years add beauty to a peaceful age.
    Thou art amidst all change the same, and strong;
Crowning the whole broad view that lies outrolled:
  The mountain and the sea thy heritage
    To keep thee beautiful, to keep thee young.

CHANGE.

THE early crows slow down the dyke-lands fly,
A sombre troop upon the heels of dawn;
While fog-thick breezes dim the morning sky,
Dark with the trailing skirts of night just gone.

The drowse of dawn clings to the early hours,
To the neglected scenes and gardens bare,
So fragrant late with plenteousness of flowers,
Now scant of bloom, and silent everywhere.

The tide flows seaward as the day expands,
And the slow Autumn waking fills the day;
And when the fallen flood rolls from the sands
There is no sign of languor or decay.

CHANGE.

The season reigns with the soft calm of rest
  O'er the whole marshland in the sun's full rays.
Each night that earlier floods the golden west,
  Each dallying dawn, comes with a newer phase.

When from the west comes a soft flood of airs,
  And brims the land with subtle charms and sweet,
Then Nature's quiet wanes with all her cares,
  And Autumn glorious roves with laughing feet.

She lingers long with Night, and bends her eyes,
  With every sun returning, to the north,
Expectant of the white-clad cavalries,
  And wan and wistful waits their coming forth.

She stills the waking bud and reds the thorn,
  And dyes the forest with a single sweep;
She looks upon the eyes of languid Morn,
  And makes her coming late and calm her sleep.

Oft are the raging winds upon the plains,
  Breathing decay upon the dulling land;
And wafting fogs, like cold unfallen rains,
  Come with the tides upon the birdless sand.

CHANGE.

The woods are stricken, and the parting song
  Of birds yet lingers on the misty dawn.
The lakes are waveless-black the hills among,
  And stiller since the laughing loon has flown.

But with the night again, through all its hours,
  The waft of a cold wind sweeps o'er the woods;
And morning breezes thick with leafy showers
  Strew field and forest, and bedeck the floods.

Like thin-draped Poverty with bending form
  Scarce hid beneath the tatters of her dress,
Appear the willows moaning in the storm,
  Unpitied in their shivering nakedness.

Again the night's far sky is bright with stars,
  But a cold trance has stilled the breeze's breath.
Beneath the morn all stricken unawares
  Lies the whole land in sombre robe of death.

What need of shade along these waysides now,
  Of arching boughs, and eye-delighting green?
No longer noon-day burns the laborer's brow;
  Bare are the vacant fields of fruit and sheen.

CHANGE.

The harvest-day has left the orchards bare;
The nights are longer, and the sun runs low.
The eager hunter for the chase prepares,
To seek the forest with the moon's full glow.

The lofty hawk no longer meets the night,
Cutting the twilight with a noiseless wing.
About the spire no swallow curves in flight,
On calm, fruit-smelling airs of evening.

The gloaming has no bat, the gloom is dead;
No dreaming bird trills short a midnight-lay.
The heavens hang with frozen stars o'erhead,
And chill until the coming of the day.

Where laughter rolls along the frozen lake
The woods have lost the silence and the gloom.
While youthful blood is flowing joy will wake
Beside the sign of death and touch of doom.

The time was good; the land may calmly rest
When Winter wanders through the silent ways.
The warmth of life again will move her breast,
To waken and restore in other days.

CHANGE.

The seasons live their days of loss and gain—
  Mild Spring like youth, and Summer like a queen;
Ripe Autumn has a brief and changeful reign
  Ere Winter's snowy mantle sweeps the green.

These changes point to work that should be done,
  And tell the sower where he cast in vain—
Beginnings end if well or ill begun,
  And with the thistle falls the ripened grain.

RESTORATION.

We stand, sweet love, beside the scattered stones
That mark where once a hearth and home have stood;
Acadian happiness that felt the rude
And ruthless blow of hate. There lie the bones,
Mayhap, of my own kindred, whence the tones
Of leafy willows come; and yonder stand
The apple-trees they set with careful hand;
While every marsh their dyking labor owns.
Now here our love forgives the hateful deed;
Forgetting not a sorrow nor a pain;
Recalling each dark page sadder than tears,
For love is reigning where their lives did bleed.
Their loss was all; yet here my life does gain
Its joyous good for all the other years.

SONG OF THE PESTILENT CREEK.

A FOUNDLING cut off from the sea
  Who had sired and suckled me, too,
I have grown but an outcast to be,
  With a hatred that nought will undo.

I have looked for the river a bride,
  I have slept to the touch of his face,
In the bloom of my youth I have died,
  In the sound of his outgoing pace.

I have listened with hate for his call,
  But to weep for the sound of his voice,
For the touch that is never to fall
  On my neck when my laugh would rejoice.

SONG OF THE PESTILENT CREEK.

Oh, the long cursèd years of my wait,
  And the fearful last cry of my hope,
And the heaven that darkened with hate,
  And the hate that outdistanced my scope!

Oh, the long summer siege of the sun
  That burned all my madness to blaze,
That gave me a work never done,
  And a curse for the rest of my days!

And I mingled my breath with the mirth
  Of the harvesting meadows of marsh,
Till death-seed of my sowing had birth,
  And each hope of my hatred was harsh.

Oh, the night-long brooding with death,
  When the stars seemed to shudder with fear,
When the fumes of my fever-hot breath
  Bore no voice for the marshes to hear!

For the killing the quiet was sure,
  And my touch not an infant could feel,
And my curse not a maid could endure
  When I placed on her lips the dark seal.

SONG OF THE PESTILENT CREEK.

So the germ of my doling was fed
For the pestilent harvest of ill,
For the life of new sorrow was bred
And a grief never ceased that may kill.

I have heard in the gloat of my night
That a death of my making was come,
And the thing called a soul took to flight,
And a voice that had stirred me was dumb.

And the toy that went drifting all day
On the dead blackened stream of my face
Shall not bring me the laughter of play,
And never again know this place.

And why shall I long or regret
That the step of the master is gone?
There is manhood to bend to me yet,
And smiting of maids to be done.

And I see all the blindness of greed,
And the shunning and fear of the strong,
And the folly of poverty's creed
In the hope of sweet life to be long.

And they aid me with madness for gain,
  Till I lay the black seed of my hand;
Soon my harvest is terror and pain,
  And a grief that shall sow all the land.

So the strength that was purposed for good
  I shall turn to undoing and death,
Till from the sea to the far purple wood
  Will no place be unmarked of my breath.

MARSH MEADOWS.

In the green level plain
  Is the mark of the tide
Where the breezes give rein
  To abandon and ride
  Till commotion is wide;
And the cloud-shadows run
With the glints of the sun.
  In the whole sea of grass
Is an ocean where breezes make waves as they pass.

Oh, the golden glad light
  Of the sea o'er the fields;
Of the blossoming white,
  And the fruitage it yields;
  And the dyke-line that shields

MARSH MEADOWS.

All the life of the land,
And the rushes that stand
  By the creek's placid play
With a memory of tide on a sea far away!

What a harvest for man
  In the sheafing of grain,
In the days' fallen span,
  In the clover's sweet stain!
  On the whole golden plain,
In the full granary
Is the sound of the sea,
  And the loading that floats
Are to me but the slow even sailing of boats.

In the sunshine abroad
  There is sweet minstrelsy,
And the finger of God
  Leaves a trace on the sea,
  And the salt breeze is free
As a wing on the tide;
And the flooding is wide
  On the marsh's broad floor,
Where the echo is caught of the ocean's faint roar.

FIRE-FLIES.

THE day of sunshine and of song awakes
  The chambers of remoter lands; while here
  The everlasting worlds on high shine clear
Through the broad night; and the unrolling brakes
And undefinèd levels, like dark lakes,
  Glimmer and glow with life far off and near—
  Winged lives invisible that mark the mere
With floating lines and falling fiery flakes.
The world is stilly on this summer night,
  Nor eye may see that labor is not done,
    Although the day has wafted from the sky.
Here everywhere pierce myriad lines of light,
  I see His radiance glorious as a sun
    In each revealing glimmer, quick to die.

THE SOUTHERN VOICE.

INTO the silence of this leafless close,
From the great hollow day, the noises float:
The unseen crows anear that mock and gloat;
The rustling passage of the tidal floes.
In the dark south a voice of warning grows,
Cut by the mud-team driver's urging throat,
And with increasing power the roaring note
Comes in, as of a beast that moans and lows.
The windless air is humid, and at rest
Are the dark heavens to their hazy edge.
A wordless premonition I can feel
Of snow that has not come; as of a guest
Long looked for—even now above the ridge
The air is filled with flakes that spin and reel.

THE TRAIL OF THE TIDE.

THE TRAIL OF THE TIDE.

My sires were sons of the sea,
  Where the waters were twin with the earth,
And they strove with the tides to be free
  With the strength that they learned ere their birth.
My sires were sons of the sea,
  And the blood is a tide in my veins,
And the life-span now measured to me
  Is all scored like the tide-tethered plains.
And the floods, whether flowing or still,
  And the river-ways singing or dead,
Shall in season be thirsty and fill,
  And give life to my heart and my head.
We have lived in the sign of the sea;
  We have loved, we have wept, we have died;
In the marshal of shoulder and knee,
  Is our life in the trail of the tide.

THE TIDE-SPIRIT.

FROM shore to shore the shining waters lay,
  Beneath the sun, as placid as a cheek.
  As one who does not hear and does not speak,
Its languid arms reclined as if to stay.
But as I looked I saw a ripple-play,
  And heard the whisper of a breeze afloat,
  And the soft waking of the tidal-note,
As the great waters turned to move away.
At night again I stood beside the sea,
  That clearer spoke, because the day was gone,
    And the loud voice of toil in sleep had died.
A murmur, almost words, came in to me;
  And then I knew the sea, never alone,
    Was coming with its spirit, side by side.

EBB AND FLOW.

Soft flows the sea to the beaches,
  Swift with the birds of the wave,
Reaching and climbing to inlands,
  Soft as a prayer on a grave;
Curling through creeks deep and crooked,
  Gliding o'er levels of green,
Hiding the rounded red rush banks
  That sing to the currents and lean;
Eddying back with long furrows
  On the edge of the coming tide,
Smiting a hundred blue rivers
  Till every motion has died;
Flooding in power and silence,
  Thrusting strong arms through the land,
Whirling the ships into harbor,
  Lifting the keels from the sand;

EBB AND FLOW.

Ebbing again to the northward,
Southward again to the sea,
Baring the darkened rock beaches,
Slanting and wet sombrely.
Dark with the draught of red rivers
The tide takes into the seas,
Miles after miles lie dark channels
Drunk deep to the lees;
And mountain-born lakes,
The children of cloud and of wood,
Wash the dark places
Till the turn and the rise of the flood.
Seeking the crystal wall-caverns
Fated with crumbling days,
Till born to the changes of season
And all the sun's fickle blaze;
Sprung from the realm of darkness
To look on the passing of years,
Amethyst purple the shore
And play with the sea as with tears.
Moving again on the marshes,
Heaving in endless unrest,
Filling and falling forever,
The breath of a living breast;

Hiding the white ribs of wreckage,
  Under the doom it has set;
Roaring the first oath of vengeance,
  Weeping the after regret;
Ebbing and flowing forever,
  Forever to brood on its wrongs,
Ages of dead to bemoan and to name
  With its wave-dirge of songs.
Hither and yon with its pageantry
  Soulless to glide,
Forever laid close in the arms
  And the deathless heart of the tide;
Led by invisible hands
  From the outermost ocean of death,
To the lands where the wind is a gladness
  And life is a breath;
A man in its hope and strength,
  A woman in love,
Strong with beauty and power
  Which no doom may remove;
Ebbing and flowing forever,
  Giving and gathering all;
Bent to the beck of no hand,
  To the will of no call.

EBB AND FLOW.

Seaward the ship points her bowsprit
  Into the roadways beyond,
Dim and wave-broken and distant,
  To fortune and failure in bond.
High hangs the figure-head hopeful
  Looking across to the shore;
Hopeful forever, till terror fall dead
  In the billowy roar.
Tides and eternity linger not here,
  Yet the fisherman's line
Hangs all day, his face in the wind,
  His hands in the brine;
Night-time and day in the clutch of the sea
  And the lumbering hours,
Where fury abides with a sleepless hand
  On the leash of the powers.
A limitless flow, a limitless deep,
  And a limitless green—
Where is the finish of things to be
  Though the first has long been.
Waters to ebb and to flow in peace,
  Or with storm to give tongue;
Life that will pulse, and themes
  By the lips to be spoken, unsung.

HIGH TIDE.

From the blue reaches of the tidal ways
The land is fringed, and every channel brim
Has the full sea's largess. From rim to rim
Run freights of life o'er all the sweeping bays.
Its high endeavor has no further praise;
No broader reach remains, no lighter whim;
Its arms encompass every headland dim;
Its glory vaunts in the sun's fullest blaze.
I see not what may come within the hour,
When all this water, like a life outspent,
Is shrunken to the passing of a breath.
So now I fill my soul with all this power,
Assuming every phase magnificent,
Until I know nor passing time nor death.

THE TIDE-LINE.

THERE was a tide last night, gone out to-day
Into the blue sea-reaches, and it played
With dallying touch or often roughly laid
Its strength upon the shore to rend and slay.
In varying mood the line's long curving way
Discloses where his wandering foot was stayed,
Only at rocky rampart steep to fade,
The sea's triumphal tread around the bay.
The seaweed dying in the sun's full light;
A shell left helpless, like a spoken thought
Meant in the secret of the heart to shine;
And the shaped wood of ship whose living light
Went down somewhere—aye, many a thing I caught
Both sad and glad along the tidal-line.

STONE RIPPLE-MARKS.

BENEATH a cliff wrenched from the inner earth,
All seamed and dark from elemental war,
I saw rich crystals marking many a scar,
Made when the earth was recent from its birth.
I read the first bare pages of her dearth
In long wave ripples of a sandstone bar,
Formed when the cycles learned to make and mar;
A rocky page of story here set forth.
I held a fossil reptile in my hand,
Till now unseen. And then there came to me
An echoed song through myriad years unsung.
And what is time, I thought, when I may stand
Beside the tracings of a former sea;
Live in the murmur of the wind yet young!

THE PINES.

GRIM warders of the everlasting crags,
To whose bleak avenue the eagle steers,
Holding an endless conclave of the peers
Where often Time lays down his blade and lags—
Ye are of other days when roaming stags
Leaped from no human voice with trembling fears;
Ere came the Micmac and the pioneers;
Or Glooscap plied his paddle to the flags.
The waters seem to speak of other days,
For this quick messenger, the courser tide,
Always the envoy of the regal sea,
Brings the same token as when all the ways
Were young, and every lingering year that died
Made timeless time before it came to me.

PARTRIDGE ISLAND.

BENEATH the ceaseless countings of the sun,
Of days and years that round the centuries,
Thou standest where the ocean smites thy knees,
Dark in thy grandeur, moveless, and alone.
Countless the storms against thy forehead thrown;
The crumbling touch of years, the wash of seas,
Shall bring to light thy hidden treasuries;
And with the deep thy strife is never done.
Whether the storms shall strike with shuddering shock,
Or seas fawn softly at thy moveless feet,
Thy face is pitiless fronting the tide.
The wakened distance hears the falling rock
That lays thy treasure bare, as if to greet
From the young world thou canst no longer hide.

TIDES.

GREAT effort that nothing can hinder,
Strong-flooded, invincible sea,
I have found in my soul a great motion
From a source that is greater than thee.

In the years of thy seasonless coursing
Thou art changeless in passion to move ;
Yet my life is a greater born moving
In the true guiding touch of my love.

In the green depths of all thy concealing
Is the same lifeless passion I read ;
But the depths of my heart none can render
Where my life often broken shall bleed.

The crags where thy way is the fiercest,
  Shall frown at thy gaze without fear;
But where is the hand that can guide it,
  Or the word for my heart-flood to hear?

And the ways that are levelled to heaven
  For the infinite gaze of the sky,
These never shall bear o'er their bosom
  The word that my longing shall cry.

These silences when long unbroken,
  Dead under the sun and the moon,
Shall never be stiller in motion
  Or in sound than my soul in its swoon.

And the joy of the whole golden torrent
  That shall flood through the redolent air,
Shall not measure the passion within me,
  Or the light that is born to be there.

For the dark that may balance the lighting
  Are the shadows when hidden in sheen,
But the grief of my grieving is never
  What the joy of my joying has been.

For thy living is ever but living,
  Not the breathing that bringeth to death,
And the end of my reach is not nearer
  For the hotter strong passion of breath.

So I read in my being a greater,
  Aye, a fiercer and fonder soul-sea
Than the cold even pulsing forever
  Of the currents, great ocean, of thee.

THE TIDE'S TRYST.

THE moonlight etched a pale, soft-fingered line
  Across the cheek of the deep-breathing tide,
  Until beneath his silvery mantle dyed
With trembling sheen and shade he glowed like wine.
Warm came his smiling ripples quick and fine;
  Then grew a sigh, until a murmur wide
  Went overhead from where the crows abide,
And all the wakened poplars made a sign.
Within the palm of the great drowsing hills,
  Her face turned full to earth, his feet at rest,
    The moon and tide have found their ancient tryst.
With his replying smile the wide night fills
  With joy, and gently o'er his glowing breast
    Tremble the touches of her golden wrist.

DRIFTING.

VOICELESS, the hour drifts without a will,
  And the noon tide lies sleeping on the sand.
  The moveless helm needs no ruling hand,
Because there is no wind awake to fill
The sails that idle in the sun, until
  A sighing breath shall come as a command,
  Sweeping across the Bay; the ship will stand
Away then, every stick and yard athrill.
As yet the tide's great heart is beating slow,
  And like a beast that hath enough of play
    It drowses near the things it yet may crush.
The wreckage splintered by the sea's mad blow,
  And the new bark that left the shore to-day,
    Are drifting through the noon-day's sleepy flush.

TO MINAS.

MINAS, storied with a people's woe,
  Forever to be linked with their distress,
  Thou hast deep wisdom in the bitterness
And joy of life. And ever ebb and flow
My soul-floods with thy tides that come and go.
  My stronger life sprang from thy red largess,
  And thy green deeps and ceaseless might no less
Did calm my love and deeper hope bestow.
Thou wast the Mentor of my singing dawn,
  Laving my lips, and mixing with my blood;
    I have no year that is not tinged with thee.
Voiced with thy deep concordance, living on
  To ebb thy strength and rise like all thy flood,
    My soul must also feed upon the sea.

AN ISLAND.

LONE rock, left isled anear the Fundean shore,
  Receive me into thy unvoiced retreats—
  Among thy piney heights and eagle seats—
To lose me in the rock-broke rushing roar
Of falling waves; or, wrapt in sound no more,
  To be with silence as a breast that beats
  New concourses of life—a soul that meets
My soul with language never heard before.
Yon melancholy moper of the night
  Is alien here. Now all my strength expands
    Beside the altitude of cliff and base,
Thick-veined with amethyst and zeolite.
  I take new freedom from thy patient hands,
    The sea's anointing fresh upon my face.

MINAS BASIN.

INTO thy cup an ocean pours, and fills
Thy great marsh-rivers where the ruddy stains
Mix with the waters of a hundred hills;
And then with eager quaffing lip he drains.
Where sea-grass under every air-flow thrills,
And stirs the level watch-ground of the cranes,
As on an altar the sea's offering spills,
Once to the day, once to the night that reigns.
On thy broad rim the great Designer's wand
Has wrought the fairest things of earth and sky
And made a wonder of thy mighty tides.
And a Romance is thine not writ with hand,
Alive in every curve, and ne'er to die
While o'er thy surface a winged vessel rides.

BLOMIDON.

DARK was thy coming, and with fire and dearth;
  Internal shudderings and voiceless throes;
  When from the burning depths thy form arose
To lie all black and shapeless on the earth;
To span the seas afar as with a girth,
  Moveless before the mighty tidal blows,
  Girding the valleys for a long repose,
Till life should vaguely long and come to birth.
O patient greatness of a slow pursuit,
  The purpose of a hundred centuries,
    Clothed with the forest glory and green plains;
Thy rock now sleeps beneath the spreading root
  And mould of ages; and a splendor skies
    Thee, child of earth, now laid in flowery chains.

SEINING.

THE broadened flats go glimmering to the sea,
And the great net that struggled with the tide
Hangs dark and moveless, for the winds have died;
On high the circling gulls cry ceaselessly.
A horse goes slowly sinking to the knee
In the red earth, dragging with dart and glide
The mud-boat after on the trackless, wide
Shore level to the sein's day fishery.
Again, beneath the stars down by the seas,
Dark, sobbing tide-waves slip through span on span
Of net, quick bared and curving like a wing.
Night labor now companioned by the breeze,
The glowing lantern glides to where for man
The harvest of the sea is garnering.

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